

**NEVER JUDGE A
BOOK
BY ITS COVER,**

AND OTHER IMPORTANT

LESSONS ABOUT

ASTHMA FOR

TEACHERS

DOES A **3-RING** BINDER TEND TO
JUST **BIND** YOU UP?



You need another 3-ring binder like you need bigger class sizes and shorter lunches. So what you're holding is really just essential information about the #1 chronic disease among children - asthma. By the way, it's also what you told us you needed to know when we surveyed some of you several months ago. Take a few minutes to scan these pages. We promise the effort will improve your classroom.



OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Dear Teacher:

This is yet another health information kit to cross your path, but don't judge it too quickly. Unlike many other kits, this one was derived from surveys and interviews of hundreds of Michigan school employees like you. As a result, we know you don't need or want big binders of superfluous information. That's why this short book contains only the most vital information necessary for you to respond effectively to asthma, and to improve the quality of life in your school. Take a few minutes to read this handbook (around 10 minutes). Complete your asthma checklist. Place the magnet in your classroom. We promise you'll breathe easier about the status of asthma care in your school. After all, everyone has the right to breathe easy.

- Asthma Initiative of Michigan

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WHAT’S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

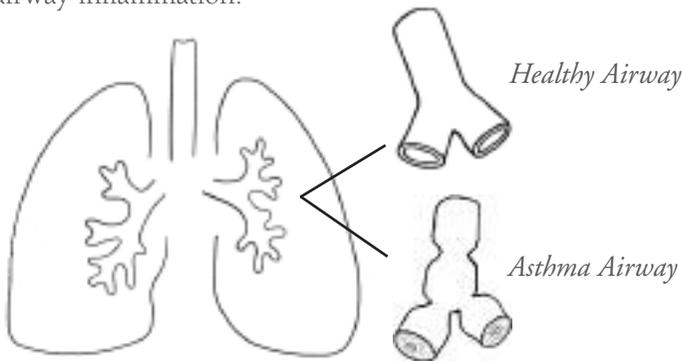
“Asthma is not serious enough for me to become concerned about it.”

True or False

FALSE: *Children can and have died from asthma episodes suffered in school. One school was sued for \$9 million for an unnecessary student death due to asthma. But thousands of children suffer less severely every day in school.*

THE DISEASE - Here's the nitty-gritty. Asthma

is a chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes the airway lining to become inflamed and swollen, blocking airflow (see diagram below). Mucus production and muscle spasm further block airflow. These complications cause asthma symptoms. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, and breathing difficulty. These symptoms range in seriousness from bothersome to life threatening. Over time asthma can result in permanent tissue damage and chronic airway inflammation.



Worse still, no known cure for asthma exists. Asthma symptoms, however, can be managed. In fact, long-term control medicines, preventive use of quick-relief medications (e.g., inhalers and nebulizers), and reducing asthma triggers can prevent symptoms from ever developing and reduce the chances of life-threatening symptoms. Without you, however, effective asthma management is not possible.

WHEN CAN TEACHERS **JUST** BE
TEACHERS?



Today's teacher is a Swiss army knife - often asked to be all things to too many children. But until there's a nurse present in every classroom, you will need to continue to be a key health-care giver as well as a teacher. Unfortunately, far too many teachers say they are inadequately trained to deal with asthma.

Are you?



WHY CARE - *You should care because*

nationally asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. In 2001, 14 million school absences were due to asthma. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on School Health, many parents keep their kids home because they fear school employees cannot properly manage or respond to a student with asthma. Overall, nearly 5 million children under the age of 18 have been diagnosed with asthma, and a great deal more remain undiagnosed. To make matters worse, asthma rates have nearly quadrupled in the last 15 years.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Managing asthma will take too much time and effort to be worthwhile.”

True or False

FALSE: *With this book, managing asthma should be simple. Here's all you really need to know:*

- 1) *how to respond to an asthma emergency,*
- 2) *the new laws about inhaler use,*
- 3) *what triggers are common in schools, and*
- 4) *how to track and manage asthma.*

You should care because asthma is more serious than many people think. It can cause death, but even those who do not suffer life-threatening symptoms risk devastating consequences associated with difficulty breathing. Students with poorly controlled asthma often feel tired, fearful, distracted, or unable to think. Many simply miss school because their parents aren't confident that the school is a safe place for a child with asthma. Obviously, your number one job is to educate. However, asthma symptoms impede learning. We know asthma may seem like a minor problem, but don't be fooled. Asthma is a pervasive disease that has a significant impact on students in your school.

You should care because you can make a significant difference in the lives of a large group of your students. Though serious and prevalent, asthma poses little threat when managed effectively. The difference in schools is simple... you. Take the time to review this book, and complete your checklist (see page 17). Post a quick reference "What To Do" magnet in your classroom. Identify all the students in your classroom with asthma. If you do, you will have significantly improved your students' ability to live without fear of asthma. Like it or not, you are ultimately responsible for how this dangerous and often undetected disease is managed in your classroom.

Q: WHEN DO 250 MICRONS **BEAT**
THE CRAP OUT OF A 50-

POUNDER?



A: When that youngster has asthma. As you can see,
dust mites have faces only a mother could love.
But the truth is most mothers would be terrified to know
how many of these critters are left to roost in the
typical Michigan classroom. 100-500 dust mites can live
in a single gram of dust, and they commonly
trigger asthma symptoms. Who's winning the fight
in your classroom?



WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Cold weather alone can trigger asthma symptoms.”

True or False

TRUE: Studies demonstrate that cold air causes symptoms in most children with asthma. Extra caution should be used to manage children's asthma when they are outside in the cold. Make sure to read your students' asthma action plans so you know how to deal with each child if weather is a trigger.

ASTHMA TRIGGERS - Many of us have a limited knowledge of asthma triggers. Below are some of the known common causes of asthma symptoms (unranked). As you read, take note of how many triggers are common in your classroom.

- Weather
 - Exposure to cold air
 - Sudden temperature change
- Vigorous exercise
- Emotional stress
- Infections
 - Common cold
 - Influenza
 - Respiratory infections
- Allergies
 - Furry/feathery animals (i.e., pets)
 - Pollen

- Feathers
- Molds
- Some foods
- House dust
- Dust mites
- Pesticides
- Dusts and Vapors from
 - Plastics
 - Grains
 - Metals
 - Wood
 - Solvents
- Air pollution
 - Perfumes
 - Cigarette smoke (even on clothing)
 - Ozone
 - Sulfur Dioxide
 - Auto exhaust
- Drugs
 - Aspirin
 - Ibuprofen
 - Some heart medications
- Others
 - New furnishings or equipment
 - Chalk
 - Dust
 - Strong odors (e.g., magic markers, perfumes, or glues)

Individual students may have additional triggers not on this list—another good reason to have an asthma action plan handy.

“SUZIE, PLEASE **BEGIN**

READING AT THE BOTTOM OF

PAGE 44.”



Asthma makes learning really tough. Too bad its symptoms aren't this easy to spot. Luckily, as a teacher, there are many things you can do to lighten the burden of asthma. Do you know what those things are?



ASTHMA SYMPTOMS - Triggers cause

symptoms, but people react to asthma in different ways.

Below is a list of asthma symptoms. Each symptom varies in seriousness from minor exacerbations to asthma emergencies.

Most of us cannot grade the seriousness of a given symptom by its appearance. Therefore, you and your staff must

RESPOND TO ALL SYMPTOMS IMMEDIATELY. Remember that this list is here for your future reference.

- Changes in breathing
 - Increased or persistent coughing
 - Wheezing
 - Breathing through the mouth
 - Shortness of breath
 - Rapid breathing
 - Difficulty breathing

- Other signs
 - Itchy chin or neck
 - “Clipped” speech (short, choppy sentences)
 - Difficulty walking
 - Fearful behavior
 - Nostrils flare when breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Agitation
 - Increased pulse rate

Allergy symptoms
Blue lips or fingertips
Sucking in of skin around chest/neck

- Verbal Complaints

“My chest is tight.”

“My chest hurts.”

“My neck feels funny.”

“My mouth is dry.”

“I don’t feel well.”

“I can’t catch my breath.”

REMEMBER, seemingly minor symptoms can have devastating effects. Plus, minor symptoms can quickly become life threatening. That’s just how asthma works. Therefore, don’t ignore the seriousness of an apparently minor symptom, like persistent coughing. Regular coughing requires a quick response, which is outlined for you next.

WHAT’S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Kids with asthma are generally in worse physical shape and lazier than kids without asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: *Asthma is not related to laziness. In fact, many Olympic athletes have asthma. The only difference between the student who can’t participate in gym class and the Olympic athlete is that the athlete manages his/her asthma with proper medications. The student might not even be aware that he/she has asthma, let alone the proper medications.*

DEAR TEACHER:

IT'S GETTING **HARDER** TO
BREATHE, MY LUNGS FEEL SMALLER,
TIGHTER, MY BREATHS ARE BECOMING
SHORTER, I CAN FEEL MY THROAT
CONSTRICTING, I AM COUGHING,
NOW **WHEEZING**, I AM GETTING
NERVOUS THAT I'LL DIE FROM
SUFFOCATION, MUCUS IS FILLING MY
BRONCHIAL TUBES, I **CAN'T**
THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE RIGHT
NOW EXCEPT GASPING FOR AIR, I'M
EXPERIENCING ASTHMA SYMPTOMS, AND
I SURE HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT TO **DO**.

SINCERELY,

YOUR STUDENT



WHAT TO DO - If a student shows any of the asthma symptoms listed earlier, you **MUST TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY**. Below is a 7-step plan outlining what to do. Follow these in the order presented.

1. Stop child's activity and move him/her away from the trigger that started the symptom(s).
2. Stay calm, speak reassuringly, & provide privacy.
3. Allow student to choose sitting or standing position.
 - Never force a student to recline.
4. Find and follow medication requirements in asthma action plan.
 - If student has no plan and no medication, call 911 as quickly as possible.
5. Call health professional in school.
6. If no response to medication after 5 to 10 minutes, call 911.
7. Monitor for 4 hours.
 - If symptom(s) reappear, call 911.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

"Putting a paper bag over a child's mouth or nose during an asthma attack **can kill** him/her."

True or False

TRUE: *Never, ever, put a paper bag over the mouth or nose of someone displaying asthma symptoms. You can kill him/her.*

Q: AT WHAT POINT DOES ABSENTEEISM AFFECT

YOUR STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES?



A: Let's not find out. Asthma is the #1 cause of absenteeism among chronic diseases. Some Michigan schools are plagued with triggers that increase missed school days. So while we can't say for sure how much lower your test scores might be, we're quite sure it's bad for business.

Is asthma a risk you're willing to take?



TEACHER’S CHECKLIST - We have pared the following checklist down to the essentials. These are basic issues you must address if you wish to respond effectively to asthma. If you cannot respond “yes” to each of the following items, you are not addressing asthma’s bare necessities.

1. Have you removed or reduced all of the following asthma

triggers from your classroom:

	NO	YES
a) Furry/feathery pets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Stuffed toys with synthetic fur?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Chalk dust?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Fumes from cleaning materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Fumes from paints?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Fumes from markers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Mice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Cockroaches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Carpet/rugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Mold?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Plants, flowers, and trees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Have you identified all of the students in your class

diagnosed with asthma?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

3. Have you identified students in your room who suffer from asthma symptoms but have not been diagnosed by their doctor?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

	NO	YES
4. Do you know where to find and how to use each student's asthma action plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have you implemented a protocol with parents for making up missed school work for students with asthma?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Have you consulted with the school nurse and parents about locations and environments for field trips (e.g., zoos, smoky areas, botanical gardens) that may trigger asthma?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are you aware that, by Michigan law, students can carry their own asthma inhaler in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you use the following to prevent fumes that can trigger asthma?		
a) White or apple cider vinegar (removes mold, mineral deposits, and crayon).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Baking soda (general cleaner and rug or refrigerator deodorizer).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Club soda (good spot remover).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Liquid, not bar, soap for hand washing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

“TAKE THIS QUIZ*, OR **GO TO**
THE OFFICE!”

- 1.** T/F – Asthma is neither serious nor a disease.
- 2.** T/F – Asthma can and has resulted in deaths in Michigan schools.
- 3.** T/F – Asthma symptoms can mask themselves as exhaustion.
- 4.** T/F – Michigan students are allowed to carry medication for asthma by state law.
- 5.** T/F – Perfume or cologne can trigger an asthma attack.

If you didn't answer all five questions correctly, your school is in danger. Scratch that; your school is in danger no matter what you scored. Asthma can be managed, but few people understand it completely. As a result, few people deal with the specifics. Results can be deadly. Who's in charge of asthma management at your school?

* Answers: F, T, T, T, T



ASTHMA ACTION PLAN -

Perhaps the worst failure in responding to asthma is to not have an action plan ready for each of your students with asthma symptoms. You've heard about the asthma action plan repeatedly. Wondering what it is? Well, we've included an asthma action plan in your folder. If you know a student has asthma, refer to the student's file for an asthma action plan. If there is not a current one on file, encourage the student's parent/guardian to follow up with their physician for an individualized plan, and keep a copy at the school for reference.

WHAT'S YOUR ASTHMA IQ?

“Children often grow out of asthma.”

True or False

FALSE: *Once you have asthma you always have it. Some children show no symptoms in their teen years. Others do. Symptoms can reappear at any age. If you wait for children to “grow out” of asthma rather than learn how to cope with and manage the disease, you put their health and psychosocial development at serious risk.*

If you notice a student exhibiting one or more of the asthma symptoms, locate the action plan before responding. If one does not exist, address the symptoms immediately.

RESOURCE LIST - We hope you found this manual useful. At the same time, it was never intended to be an exhaustive resource. Should you need or want more information about the disease, we've provided a list (below) of organizations and websites that can provide you with comprehensive information, further tools and resources, speakers for staff training, etc.

1. Michigan Resources

a. **Asthma Initiative of Michigan:**

1-866-EZLUNGS (395-8647), www.getasthmahelp.org

b. **Michigan Asthma Coalitions:**

<http://getasthmahelp.org/UserCoalitionList.asp>

c. **Michigan Association of School Nurses:**

734-992-2223, <http://www.michiganschoolnurses.org/>

d. **National Jewish Medical Research Center**

(Lung line): 1-800-222-5864, www.njc.org

2. National Resources

a. **Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of**

Asthmatics, Inc.: 1-800-878-4403, www.aanma.org

• Breatherville USA,

<http://www.aanma.org/breatherville.htm>

b. **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and**

Immunology: 1-800-822-2762, www.aaaai.org

c. **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:**

1-877-2-ASTHMA, www.asthmaandallergies.org

d. **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and**

Immunology: 1-800-842-7777, www.allergy.mcg.edu

- e. **American Lung Association:** 1-800-LUNG USA,
www.lungusa.org
 - School Programs
 - Open Airways for Schools
 - f. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**
 - **National Center for Environmental Health:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/default.htm>
 - **Strategies for Addressing Asthma with a Coordinated School Health Program:**
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/00_pdf/asthma.pdf
 - g. **NHLBI Health Information Center:**
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/index.htm>
 - h. **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:**
1-800-438-4318
 - Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse,
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tfs/guideh.html
 - Integrated Pest Management for Schools,
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/index.html>
3. **National Education Association Health Information Network, Asthma and Schools website:**
www.asthmaandschools.org

**THE END,
BUT DON'T STOP NOW!**

“YOU MUST ACT.”

True or False

TRUE: It takes some effort, but you must respond to lessen the threat of asthma. Use your checklist as a guide to what you need to do next. To answer any questions, and to schedule a (dreaded) in-service, just contact us. We'd love to help you respond to asthma in the best ways possible.



For more information, more books,
or just more help with asthma, call the
American Lung Association of Michigan at
1-866EZLUNGS (1-866-395-8647)
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